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ABSTRACT

This "Fastback" provides suggestions for expanding or developing an academic summer program, which is an educational strategy that uses a program evaluation to achieve specific goals or outcomes designed to serve a selected student population in a school or community setting during the summer. Although no single model exists for these programs, a number of factors or variables that contribute to success are evident. High-quality programs meet nonnegotiable criteria, such as: safety, good supervision, and cleanliness, as well as negotiable criteria, such as: parent participation, documentation of results, inservice training for staff, avoidance of overlapping services, interagency cooperation, and longevity in the community. Some of the key components of effective programs, include students and staff, recruitment, and funding. Good programs have a focused and articulated vision that recognizes the value of diverse backgrounds, have a solid organizational structure, boast dedicated staff, hold high expectations for students, and have workers who exhibit caring and trust. Logistics also play an important role in any program's success, and various types of programs, general management, risk management, and scheduling are covered. A final section looks at evaluation and its importance to the process. (RJM)

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How to Create Successful Academic Summer Programs

by
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Introduction

Academic summer programs can increase students' learning at any grade level. Such programs can be designed to enhance the motivation of the students in certain fields, to help teachers develop innovative curricula and activities, and to involve parents, community organizations, and professionals from a variety of fields. Academic summer programs are a viable and strategic education alternative for schools, colleges, and nonprofit community organizations.

Teachers have always known that after the long summer break their students need to spend most of September reviewing material they learned the year before. Academic summer programs can be an opportunity to augment cognitive achievement. Instructional time in the summer mitigates the negative effects of summer break time. Cooper and his colleagues (1996) provide an excellent review of research on the effect of summer vacation on students' acquisition of academic skills, on the vacation period's different effects on students' knowledge in various subjects, and on the vacation period's effects on students with distinct personal and familial characteristics. Their work indicates that

achievement test scores decline over summer vacation. In fact, students appear to lose one month of grade-level equivalent skills from the day school is dismissed to the first day of school after the summer vacation.

The negative effects of summer vacation vary among subject areas. Summer loss tends to be more dramatic for math-related subjects and spelling skills than for reading, vocabulary, and language skills. One possible explanation for this differentiated effect is that reading and language skills are learned both at home and in school (Murname 1975). However, spelling and arithmetic fundamentals are taught through classroom drill. Cooper and his colleagues provide another possible explanation when they suggest that both math computation and spelling skills require learning factual and procedural knowledge, whereas other skill areas, especially math concepts, problem solving, and reading comprehension, are more conceptually based. Cognitive psychologists suggest that factual and procedural learning needs extensive practice, while conceptual understanding requires experience but not practice or rote drill. Academic summer programs can enhance the chances for students to retain knowledge by providing continuity of practice.

Probably the most frequently cited study on the effects of summer vacation is Heyns' study of Atlanta school children (1978). Heyns undertook her work in response to the prevailing view during the 1970s that schooling had no effect on closing the achievement gaps between black and white students and rich and poor students. Her research focused on using the summer as

an experimental control and as a proxy for no schooling to provide a point of comparison for looking at whether schooling makes a difference for disadvantaged students. Heyns tracked 3,000 sixth- and seventh-graders over two years. She looked at their scores on standardized achievement tests given in May and October of each year, surveyed their parents for information on their socioeconomic status, and interviewed a smaller sample of 500 students to find out how they had spent their summers. Heyns found that schooling makes a substantial contribution to cognitive growth. During the school year the relatively advantaged students learned as well as less privileged students; however, disadvantaged students showed a relatively low rate of achievement during the summer compared to the school year. She also found that "summer learning is considerably more dependent on parental status than is learning during the school year" (p. 93) because, while the influence of families is continuous, the effects of education are assumed to be intermittent.

Heyns found that the gap between black and white children and between lower- and higher-income students widens disproportionately during the months that the schools are not in session. Heyns' data suggest "that if all schools were to be closed down into one endless summer, the eventual gap between initially advantaged children and initially disadvantaged children would be greater than it is now" (1978, p. xi). Socioeconomic background exerts substantial influence on achievement during the summer. As Heyns clearly states: "Socioeconomic status is not merely an individual

attribute. . . but an active set of conditions that directly shape learning" (p. 118).

Change in achievement over the summer months appears to be related to race and family income. The weight of evidence seems clear. Idorenyin Jamar (1994), in a recent paper on early studies of summer retention, concluded that studies with well-controlled sampling designs found wealthy majority students and schools gained more over the summer months than poor minority students and schools. Researchers do not know with certainty why learning seems to slow down so much for poor students when they are not in school. However, Jamar suggests that "it seems clear there are differences in what society is giving kids . . . advantaged kids seem to get more structured activities and more enrichment . . . after all, summer camp, ballet lessons, museum visits and so forth all cost money" (1994, p. 9). Socioeconomic inequities are heightened by summer break. Heyns (1978) and Entwistle and Alexander (1992, 1994) explained the effect of income by suggesting that low income translates directly into fewer learning opportunities and less support for learning-related activities during the summer vacation. Academic summer programs can compensate for these effects.

At the same time, neither gender nor race appear to have a consistent moderating influence on the negative effects of summer vacation. But when race is influenced by economic disparity, rather than biological or cultural differences, income data unequivocally indicate a slower rate of learning during the summer period than during the school year. Students' family income and race

variables suggest significant drops in summer differential rates of achievement or learning, particularly in reading achievement for different income groups. Heyns sees this dilemma when she asks: "Which programs most effectively raised summer achievement levels? The answer is those programs that enrolled the largest number of high income children. If the question is, which summer programs most reduced the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children, the answer is that none did so very well. . . the most persistent influence on learning was the child's family background" (1978, p. 117).

Another variable on the effect of summer vacation is grade level. On average, first- and second-graders showed insignificant gains in achievement over the summer, while students in fourth grade and beyond showed significant losses (Wintre 1986; Allinder et al. 1992; Entwistle and Alexander 1992). This sets in motion a detrimental influence on later learning.

A relationship also may be drawn between the development and implementation of academic summer programs and current proposals involving school calendar changes. Propositions for changes in the current nine-month calendar, under which schools are closed in summer, call for two major alternatives: 1) an extended school year that increases the number of days students spend in the school (Elam, Rose, and Gallup 1996) and 2) the use of school buildings year-round. Students might or might not attend school for more days, but the summer vacation is no longer defended (Ballinger, Kirschenbaum, and Poimbeauf 1987; DeBlois 1997). Propo-

nents of both forms of alternative scheduling raise concerns about the possible negative effect of summer vacations on learning. They suggest that students learn best when instruction is continuous and that a three-month break is too long.

However, research on the topic of time spent in schools also points out that learning is only one of the many components that are necessary for worthwhile education. Robert DeBlois states that "much is possible outside of the buildings we call schools and apart from the organizations, regulations, and politics that control virtually everything that goes on in these buildings. From this perspective, it becomes easier to see how summer can be a time of tremendous opportunity for valuable learning by students and adults" (1997, p. 715).

Schools can choose to continue with the lack of learning opportunities and decline of skills that follow the current dominant school calendar, arguing that rather than increase the amount of time spent in school, it makes more sense to improve the way this time is used. Or schools might direct their efforts toward developing and implementing summer enrichment programs as a strategy for correcting the negative effect of summer vacation on learning. This fastback suggests steps to follow in developing or expanding academic summer programs.

Purpose and Goals

Simply defined, an academic summer program is an educational strategy aimed at achieving specific goals or outcomes using a set of objectives, a curriculum, activities, resources, and program evaluation — all specifically tailored to serve a selected student population in a school or community setting during the summer.

In general, there are two distinct purposes for an academic summer program. A program may be designed to focus on solving or preventing certain problems. Or a program may be designed to build intellectual "assets."

Problem-focused programs may target, for example, school dropout rates, alcohol use and abuse, or the participation of under-represented students in certain fields. These programs select components that provide a treatment for the problem and try to reduce or control negative behavior through prevention.

Although there always will be a need for problem-focused programs, the alternative perspective increasingly is being seen. An "asset-building" program focuses on intellectual development and enrichment.

A Search Institute study of more than 250,000 youth across the nation suggests that young people with more "assets" — positive learning experiences and resulting

intellectual skills and knowledge — are more likely to grow up to be valuable members of society. Philosophically, proponents of asset-building regard young people as resources, rather than problems, and encourage cooperation instead of competition. Their beliefs are grounded in the literature on risk and resiliency. They advocate supportive, empowering relationships with peers and parents and other adults to protect youth from engaging in high-risk behaviors (Leffert et al. 1996).

High-quality academic summer programs also can influence the decisions that the target students will make and the educational paths they will choose in the future. Nancy Leffert and her colleagues rightfully assert: "One characteristic that most distinguishes healthy communities from less healthy communities is the percentage of youth who are engaged in some form of positive youth activity" (1996, p. 2). Academic summer programs can provide this important resource for schools and other community-based organizations to allow young people to participate and experience success, to establish positive and meaningful relationships, to develop social and personal skills, and to increase academic preparation and educational attainment. Academic summer programs are tools for educators and other youth-serving practitioners to promote and support positive student development.

Goals for academic summer programs can be divided into four major types: education goals, special skills goals, motivation goals, and career goals.

Education goals incorporate instructional objectives, a curriculum, activities, resources, evaluation, and dis-

semination plans in the design of the academic summer program. A key element is a strong focus on the teaching and learning of academic subject matter, both to enhance students' achievement and to teach new knowledge. For example, an academic summer program might seek to *improve* participants' math and science performance to better prepare students for high school or college classes. Other goals might be to *introduce* engineering or science concepts or to *demonstrate* how academic courses relate to the world outside the school.

Special skills goals focus on the acquisition and development of particular skills, usually incorporating practice through real-life experiences. Examples of this type of goal include teaching work-related skills, such as writing résumés, public relations planning, or teamwork. An academic summer program might focus on helping students to develop specific leadership, computer, or research skills.

Motivation goals target the development of positive social behaviors and the enhancement of students' psychological development through building self-esteem and increasing students' ability to interact with others. Helping students to develop feelings of self-efficacy, citizenship competency, and physical fitness are related to motivation for academic success. Other examples of motivation goals include providing alternative ways for participants to learn and teaching students how to form meaningful relationships with co-workers, usually in the context of real-life situations that build self-confidence and a capacity for independent learning.

Career goals include career exploration objectives. A strong focus is placed on increasing participants' interests in available career fields. Activities include opportunities for students to interact with adults in actual work settings. For example, participants can meet professionals from different career fields to gain information about education, work settings, and employer expectations.

Clearly articulated goals are the compass for an academic summer program. They should guide the development of a curriculum and instructional activities, and program evaluation should be directly related to assessing whether the goals have been met. Once the program's goals have been selected, a set of specific objectives should be defined to narrow the scope of the program design.

Characteristics

Goals and objectives are the first in a series of steps that must be taken in order to ensure a successful academic summer program. Planners also need to consider the characteristics of the summer program, the targeted students and qualified staff and how they can be recruited, and how the program can be funded.

Primary Components

A comprehensive report describing 122 summer science camp programs funded by the National Science Foundation from 1992 to 1996 indicates that academic focus (100%), field trips (86.1%), introduction to research (85.2%), mentoring (81.1%), and parent involvement (63.1%) are the primary components that should be included in the design of any successful academic summer program (Denoya et al. 1997).

Academic focus. An academic curriculum should include enrichment and skills-improvement activities, career counseling, and an academic year follow-up component in order to increase participants' knowledge in the selected subjects. Advanced coursework, tutorials in the subjects, involvement in lab projects, verbal and written commu-

nication skills as they relate to the core subjects of the summer program, counseling regarding career opportunities, and use of business or industry internships all work to underline a strong academic focus.

Field trips. A field trip component in the summer program serves as a strong motivation for the participants. It also allows teachers to relate core subjects to the world of work. The answers to students' academic and career questions often are found in museums, laboratories, businesses, health organizations, and the communities. But the use of field trips as "classrooms" also goes beyond experience to exposure. As Heyns indicates, "Exposure to diverse places and people may expand horizons and stimulate interest in the world outside of one's family background" (1978, p. 175).

Introduction to research. Research and field work experiences during the summer program mean that certain subjects are taken out of the traditional classroom and transformed into experiences that stress scientific inquiry, teamwork, communication, and leadership. Doing research gives students opportunities to assume responsibility for defining their own objectives, applying learning to work, practicing communication skills, and sharing understandings gained from study.

Mentoring. Students work with successful professionals in the selected fields, resulting in sustained participant interest and motivation in careers, direct dialogue between students and adult professionals acting as mentors, and development of partnerships among the schools, colleges, community professional organizations, and businesses. Leffert and her colleagues indicate that

mentoring, when done well, "can have a powerful, positive impact on both adults and young people involved" (1996, p.14).

Parent involvement. Involving parents or members of the extended family is essential for an effective summer program, especially with young participants. Parents play a vital role in their children's learning experiences, no less so during the summer program than during the regular school year. Parents should attend the summer program orientation, special workshops, closing ceremonies, and field trips. They should be enlisted as partners in the summer program, because their participation increases student attendance, motivation, self-esteem, and good behavior.

Students and Staff

Summer academic programs can enroll students and recruit staff according to either general or specific criteria. For example, if a general academic summer program is suitable for any K-8 student, it can be taught by any qualified K-8 teacher. If an academic summer program is aimed at first-generation college-bound students, the teachers for such a program might be chosen because they have specific qualifications for working with disadvantaged or at-risk youth.

A number of barriers can prevent young people — particularly low-income youth — from participating in summer learning, including: transportation problems, high costs for program fees and supplies, lack of knowledge about summer programs, and lack of programs of

interest. When designing an academic summer program, it is important to take these factors into consideration. Heyns found that "the single variable that has proved to be the most strongly associated with summer learning is family income" (1978, p.120). Family income is a reasonably good correlate of cultural or social opportunities. Low income translates into fewer learning opportunities or less support for learning-related activities during the summer vacation. Therefore it is especially important to reach out to low-income parents and students to involve them in the academic summer program. In particular, the outreach effort must consider family income and the ramifications of program costs and logistics.

Recruitment

Active identification, recruitment, and selection of students and staff are important to program success; however, the recruitment process needs to begin with the program director. A program director should be selected on the basis of a solid education background, good managerial skills, and successful experience, particularly in planning, problem solving, decision making, and communication. The program director also will need to be an inspired and imaginative leader with the ability to motivate staff and students and to serve as a role model. Candidates for this position may be found in the usual ways in which administrators are recruited: by ads in newspapers, contacts with community organizations, Internet ads, or through internal school

system searches by letters to department heads, institutional flyers and newsletters, bulletins, e-mail news, or word of mouth.

Teaching and counseling staff — and other support personnel — can be recruited in a similar manner. High standards should be expected, regardless of whether the staff members are employed on a paid full-time or part-time basis or are unpaid volunteers.

Students, like their teachers, should be recruited and selected based on the purposes and goals of the program. Several strategies can be used to recruit students from the target populations, including:

- Student visits to summer program sites, particularly if a college campus will be used;
- Articles about the upcoming summer program in local and school newspapers;
- Communication with schools, students, parents, and community agencies by phone, mail, e-mail, and personal meetings;
- Group meetings with prospective summer students and their parents at schools, community organizations, churches, and parent associations;
- Discussions by former summer students with prospective participants; and
- Distribution of brochures and application forms.

In some cases, student recruitment may include a competitive application process, requiring the students to write an essay or participate in an interview. Applicants also may be asked to provide references. Some very popular summer programs may necessitate the use

of a waiting list if the number of applicants exceeds the allotted spaces for the program.

In spite of good planning, problems in student recruitment can arise, such as miscommunication and missed deadlines (for application, fee payment, and so on), lack of support from external sources, and last-minute pull-outs. To prevent miscommunication and missed deadlines, program administrators should rely on clear documentation and frequent communication with students and parents. To increase support, program administrators should help parents become advocates of the program and facilitate communication between program sources and constituents. And to compensate for last-minute pull-outs, it is a good idea to keep the numbers flexible, rather than absolute.

Funding

Finally, program design and funding are inseparable. Administrative skills, program philosophy that has developed in response to student and community needs, and a solid track record of outcomes all contribute to achieving funding.

Funding for an academic summer program can come from one or several sources, such as federal, state, and local grants; student fees; fundraising activities; voluntary contributions; private foundations; and school or library boards. An excellent reference for funding sources is the *Encyclopedia of Foundations*, which lists foundation names and addresses by subject. Professional associations also can provide planning and incentive grants for

summer programs in specific academic subjects. Using the Internet by searching key concepts, such as "philanthropy," "U.S. grants," "corporate fund matching," "government grants," and so forth, can reveal a wealth of funding opportunities.

Logistics

Many logistical considerations will be guided by the nature of the population to be served. For example, if the target population is children of single parents, more consideration will need to be given to how parents can be involved in nontraditional ways than would be the case in serving children from two-parent families. If the target population is students with disabilities, accommodations in transportation and classroom furniture and its arrangement may be essential to permit full participation.

Similarly, the purpose of the program will determine some logistics. For example, if a summer program is to concentrate on providing new learning experiences, developing new skills, and assessing behavior or attitudes, then the program will need to be multi-curricular, involve numerous and varied activities, provide a variety of resources, and extend over a period of time adequate to the stated goals. Staff will need to be hired who can teach the target information, and a thorough evaluation plan will need to be developed. All of this will require a substantial budget.

On the other hand, a more focused program — for example, drug abuse prevention — may be delivered in

a more concentrated timeframe with more targeted resources and a specifically trained staff. And all of these considerations may argue for certain sites over others. In some cases the school may be the ideal site because of its standard classroom environment. In other cases an alternative site may be preferable, particularly in working with students for whom the regular school experience has been negative.

Four logistical considerations are common among all types of academic summer programs: curriculum development, orientation, facilities, and field trips. Each merits a brief description.

Curriculum development. The curriculum for an academic summer program should balance instructional and noninstructional activities. For example, a comprehensive program should integrate "electives" and required academic work, provide computer and lab — or "hands-on" — exposure, introduce research skills, include multicultural content material, supply mentors, and in general adopt a holistic approach. A more focused, problem-centered program also should introduce students to various learning approaches, including working well with others through the refinement of communication and cooperation skills.

Orientation. The smooth operation of an academic summer program is facilitated by attention to orientation. Both staff and students need to understand the operation of the program. In addition to face-to-face orientation, which should include parents and other community members, a handbook can be invaluable. Such a program handbook should describe the summer program in terms of its goals and objectives, schedule,

curriculum, activities, site, length, academic and administrative staff, participants, and other relevant information.

Facilities. Early contact with facility-related providers is essential. At least six months of advance work will be needed to coordinate food service, library, computer and science labs, housing, recreational facilities (pool, track, etc.), transportation services, health services, and related public services. Early networking with all parties involved in the summer program increases communication and smoothes logistics.

Field trips. When field trips are included in an academic summer program — almost a universal component — it is important to set field trip goals that complement the curriculum. Choosing "learning sites," such as museums, zoos, hospitals, business centers, and so forth, increases the instructional value of the experience. Connecting field trips with classroom content enhances the teaching/learning relationship. Certain arrangements must be made prior to the field trips. The site ought to be reviewed by staff in advance, tickets may need to be purchased, and onsite work may have to be arranged in advance to accommodate the group. It may be wise to arrange for a meal at the destination (or on the way) and to obtain special directions for arrival and parking.

Types of Programs

Academic summer programs tend to be either commuter or residential programs. A very small percentage

of summer programs commingle commuters and residents. Programs may be coeducational or single gender, include highly structured or less-structured activities, charge a fee or be free of charge to the participants. Academic summer programs also vary in their criteria for selecting participants and in program duration (Denoya et al. 1997).

Commuter programs. The major contributing factors to bear in mind when selecting the commuter design is the age of the participants and the program location. A commuter program can provide students up to six or seven hours of daily instruction, along with full days of scheduled field trips. A schedule from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. is highly recommended.

The location of an academic summer program has a dramatic impact on student and parent participation in commuter programs. It is advisable to contact community or school bus services early to facilitate transportation to and from the program site (and for field trips).

Residential programs. A residential summer program exposes its participants extensively to the program site. The vast majority of residential programs are located on college and university campuses, because they can provide the needed facilities for housing, as well as for instruction. In addition, students in the summer program can enjoy a taste of college life.

The duration and scope of a summer residential program is variable and should be determined in large measure by the program's purpose, goals, and budget. However, site availability also will play a role. Among the cost factors, program planners will need to consider

the following list. Most of these, with the exception of housing, also apply to commuter programs:

- Staff salaries
- Housing and food service costs
- Instructional materials preparation and printing
- Facility use fees (swimming pool, theater, computer lab, etc.)
- Library use fees
- Stipends to aides, mentors, etc.
- Insurance for students and staff
- Field trip costs (including food, transportation, admission, etc.)
- Special costs (banquets, diplomas, T-shirts, etc.)

Residential summer programs — particularly those of long duration — often function best with weekends off. Students and staff need a healthy break from the intensity of a residential program.

A closing ceremony should be scheduled for the last day of the program, with the purpose to reward and appreciate the accomplishments of students and staff alike. Awards and a banquet can appropriately mark the end of both commuter and residential summer programs.

General Management

A suggested organization chart consists of a program director, an assistant director or academic coordinator (for large-scale programs), a secretary, and a community coordinator. Residential programs should add a residential coordinator. The number of students will determine the

teaching staff, teacher aides, residential assistants, and other support staff to be hired. A fair ratio is to have one staff member (or full-time equivalent) for every 10 participants.

Handbook. While all summer programs require a high degree of organization, residential programs function best if careful attention is given to organization, rules, and close coordination and communication among the staff and students. A well-written, comprehensive handbook is essential. This handbook should be developed by the program director with assistance from staff and input from students, parents, and other educators and community members. It should include policy statements about:

- Academic standards
- Classroom management
- Housing
- Workshops, particularly evening workshops
- Food services
- Health care and insurance
- Telephone calls
- Resident assistant and other staff duties
- Dress and behavior
- Visitors
- Public safety
- Crisis management

Along with these policies, the handbook should provide: a list of students and staff, registration information and important dates, class and workshop schedules, field trip dates, lists of important events and telephone

numbers, a map or floor plan of the program site, a brief description of the academic and non-academic activities, directions regarding health emergencies and the program's health coverage insurance, a description of special workshops for parents with dates and places, and public safety phone numbers and the location of emergency telephones.

Staff training. Prior to the summer program, staff training sessions are crucial for orientation, logistics, coordination, and communication. However, staff training should not take more than two days. To support this training, all written materials should be prepared in advance. The curriculum of an academic summer program should be well-developed. Supportive materials need to be available in sufficient quantities. Academic and administrative forms should be available. The handbook will be a good guide and discussion starter for the staff training program.

Risk Management

Residential programs in particular, but summer programs in general, include risks that must be addressed. Most of these risks can be prevented with adequate training and supervision. Effective risk management engenders trust between the program staff and parents and community participants, as well as between teachers and students. Risks include:

Emotional and psychological issues, such as students' feelings of depression, suicidal language or behavior, aggressive or unusually passive interpersonal skills,

profane language, prejudiced attitudes, physical abuse, sexual activity, gang signs or paraphernalia, smoking and drug and alcohol abuse, eating disorders, and other at-risk behaviors. Program staff must be prepared to assist students to obtain counseling services and must enforce clear policies regarding these matters. (These policies should be spelled out in the handbook, as previously described.) Major roles in dealing with such risks will be played by the residential counselor(s) and the program director.

Health issues involve the risks of injury during program activities, such as sports or lab work. Logistical consideration should be given to first-aid training, the location and use of first-aid kits, and so on. Health insurance is a common component of summer programs, and both staff and parents need to know who is responsible for what in a medical emergency. Again, clear policies should be spelled out in the program handbook.

Staff issues may arise, including improper staff involvement with students, use of inappropriate language, allowing students to leave the residential setting without proper authorization, and other problems related to staff understanding of the legal and ethical constraints of their position. Procedures need to be consistent with policy; and before the summer program begins, staff training should be used to establish standards of conduct and performance.

Effectively managing these types of risks often is aided by the visibility of the program director, assistant director, and counselors. Supervision that is consistent with clear policies can reduce risks in all areas. When

problems do arise, immediate action and documented proceedings can help to ensure that such problems do not recur.

Scheduling

Most academic summer programs can begin in the middle of June, often as early as the week (or even the day) after regular school classes end. They usually can continue until the middle of August. Program duration can range from one week to all summer, though six weeks often is a practical maximum. As previously suggested, weekends should be left free for students and their families, even in the case of residential programs.

The ages of the students will suggest an appropriate length for the various learning experiences. Younger students will thrive in situations where learning is broken into small segments and a high level of hands-on activity is employed. More mature students can concentrate longer, but they also will need variety if the program lasts all day. Day-long schedules can vary: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., 12:30 to 8:30 p.m., and so on. The schedule should meet the needs of the students and match the purposes and goals of the program.

A typical residential schedule might be planned as follows:

6:00 Wake up
7:00 Breakfast
8:00 Academic activities begin
12:00 Lunch

1:00 Cultural and recreational activities
4:00 Break and dinner
6:00 Study time, workshops, parent activities
11:00 Lights out

The key to successful scheduling is to take into consideration not only the program goals but also the students' needs according to their development and interests.

Evaluation

Evaluating summer academic programs and documenting their positive benefits for students are important to ensure future funding and support. Youth programs around the country are facing calls for accountability, yet few resources are being allocated to the study of summer programs. As Marsha Lakes Matyas says, "Most intervention programs have not been evaluated extensively" (1994, p. 34).

Herman Blake (1985) identified four areas that play a significant role in a summer program's outcome: institutional commitment, program leadership, program conceptualization, and faculty involvement. These are areas to examine in evaluating an academic summer program. Those programs that are strong in all four areas have the greatest chance to achieve their goals; those with weaknesses in one or more areas produce less satisfying results.

In a similar fashion, more recently Leffert and her colleagues (1996) offered four ways to examine a program's effects: by studying outcomes, by comparing similar programs, by reviewing the program's conceptual framework, and by using an approach that integrates all of these methods.

Outcome study. Program staff (or external evaluators) can directly study the outcomes of the program. This is most feasible when the program has clearly stated purposes and goals and when the program can be expected to produce demonstrable results over a short time span. However, many academic summer programs are general; measurable outcomes may be difficult to achieve. Yet such programs may be nonetheless valuable to students. Thus good outcome studies can be difficult to design, implement, and complete.

Comparison study. A series of individual outcome studies can demonstrate the effects of a program that is repeated over time, thereby increasing the visibility of the program's accomplishments. However, the same limitations apply to multiple outcome studies as to a single study. The result of comparison simply is a larger body of information from which generalizations can be drawn about a program's efficacy.

Conceptual framework review. Evaluation of an academic summer program can be bound to a theoretical stance that is understood by the stakeholders. Program providers should be able to clearly articulate how the program goals are tied to instructional or social theories that serve to undergird the program. In this manner, program advocates can argue that the program "ought to be" successful in the long run, even if clear evidence is not available over the short term.

Integrated approach. Combining two or three of the above methods can provide a way to systematically gather information that fits within the theoretical framework used to develop the summer program. This multifac-

eted strategy can provide a wealth of information on which to base a verdict of success or failure with regard to the program's accomplishments. The integrated approach also provides the most information for program improvement, expansion, or restructuring when limitations in the current design are noted.

In developing an evaluation plan — whether along the lines suggested above or in some other manner — several questions should be considered: Is the summer program ready for a summative evaluation? Is the summer program stable, or is it going through modifications or staff changes? Are the goals realistic and clearly stated? Is it probable that the program components or activities will result in the desired outcome? Is the program of adequate duration, intensity, and frequency to achieve the anticipated outcomes? Ultimately, the goal of any evaluation strategy (or set of strategies) should be to provide information that practitioners can use to strengthen the program and to share the insights gained through the process with colleagues, supervisors, parents, and other interested parties.

Finally, a useful component of any evaluation strategy is a self-evaluative questionnaire to be completed by program staff and participants. This questionnaire should be developed to reflect the specifics of the program. For example, the questionnaire might ask staff to rate some of the following according to their usefulness or appropriateness: orientation, staff handbook, curriculum, student placement, schedule, responsibilities, and so on. Such feedback will assist project administrators in improving procedures and communication.

Conclusion

What makes a successful academic summer program? Paul Biehl, a Summer Science Camp student at Harvey Mudd College in California, put it this way:

> We were able to learn how to work with other people who have different ideas and backgrounds, which is essential to be able to work in tomorrow's world. Today, most children spend their time watching television, not envisioning or even thinking as they sit and do nothing but breathe. Children of today must learn hands-on skills and be able to use those skills to make tomorrow a better place to live for everyone. We are tomorrow's leaders; and if we are ill-prepared, then the world may fall apart at our fingertips.

No single model exists for the successful academic summer program. What exists is a number of factors, conditions, variables — key ingredients for success in developing summer programs. A growing number of researchers have begun to integrate research and evaluation studies with the objective of identifying those key characteristics for successful programs. And many practitioners are learning valuable lessons by carefully examining their own summer programs and adjusting those programs to make them better each year.

Leah M. Lefstein and Joan Lipsitz (1995) have documented high-quality programs that effectively meet the needs of young adolescents in their communities and that operate after school and during vacation periods. According to Lefstein and Lipsitz, these programs succeed because they meet both "non-negotiable" and "negotiable" (or flexible) criteria. Non-negotiable criteria include: safety, good supervision, cleanliness, caring adults, responsiveness to local community needs and wishes, and developmental appropriateness for students.

Successful programs also give attention to "negotiable" criteria, including parent participation, documentation of results, inservice training for staff, avoidance of overlapping service with other community organizations, interagency cooperation, and longevity in the community.

Evidence strongly suggests that the following are effective, powerful strategies for summer program success:

- Focused and articulated program vision with ample services and learning opportunities tailored to the needs of the participants;
- recognition of the value of diverse backgrounds and experiences, understanding them in the context of their families' environments;
- genuine caring, respect, and trust between students and program staff;
- Awareness by program staff and students of the summer program goals, strategies, and outcomes;
- solid organizational structure, including an energetic and committed board and institutional lead-

ership producing a positive environment for all participants;

- dedicated staff who act as vigorous advocates for and with students;
- high expectations for attendance, academics, and behavior; and
- collaborative efforts of community organizations, churches, business, schools, higher education institutions, and other community groups.

Effectively serving a wide range of students of all ages and at all levels of development through summer academic programs continues to be a challenge. But many communities across the nation are attempting to reclaim their schools as multipurpose community centers for *all* their citizens, and summer programming is part of that effort. Leffert and her colleagues correctly state, "Young people who do not participate in any youth developmental programs may well be at greatest risk, as they do not have the broad range of opportunities for building strengths and supportive relationships which programs can provide" (1996, p. 10).

Recently, I worked with several co-authors to develop the first and, to date, only comprehensive report describing 122 summer science camps nationwide funded by the National Science Foundation (Denoya et al. 1997). This report, titled *The National Science Foundation Summer Sciences Camps: Leaving a Legacy of Successes*, offers a wealth of information on summer academic programs at the middle school level (grades 6 through 9) and includes a list of program directors indexed by state.

Copies are available at SUNY College at Fredonia in New York.

Another useful source of information recently was published by the Search Institute in Minneapolis. Titled *3:00 to 6:00 P.M.: Programs for Adolescents*, this report describes after-school programs nationwide for students at various levels. It also includes a list of program directors. Yet another helpful resource is the *YouthALIVE! Directory of Programs 1991-1995*, published by the Association of Science-Technology Centers in Washington, D.C. All of these books are listed in the Resources section of this fastback.

Many schools and communities are discovering the power for good of well-planned academic summer programs. As Howard Knoll wrote not long ago: "We know what works. We just need to do more of it" (1995).

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Phi Delta Kappa Fastbacks

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Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation

The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation was established on 13 October 1966 with the signing, by Dr. George H. Reavis, of the irrevocable trust agreement creating the Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation Trust.

George H. Reavis (1883-1970) entered the education profession after graduating from Warrensburg Missouri State Teachers College in 1906 and the University of Missouri in 1911. He went on to earn an M.A. and a Ph.D. at Columbia University. Dr. Reavis served as assistant superintendent of schools in Maryland and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh. In 1929 he was appointed director of instruction for the Ohio State Department of Education. But it was as assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction in the Cincinnati public schools (1939-48) that he rose to national prominence.

Dr. Reavis' dream for the Educational Foundation was to make it possible for seasoned educators to write and publish the wisdom they had acquired over a lifetime of professional activity. He wanted educators and the general public to "better understand (1) the nature of the educative process and (2) the relation of education to human welfare."

The Phi Delta Kappa fastbacks were begun in 1972. These publications, along with monographs and books on a wide range of topics related to education, are the realization of that dream.